

June 12, 2009

Those of us who participate in this work are grateful that *Time* Magazine recently featured the approach in their article "Staying Sane May Be Easier Than You Think" (June 22nd issue, available online <http://bit.ly/JYAYY>). The article has done a great service in taking a complex topic and making it accessible for a broad readership, and in helping people to understand that mental illness can be treated and even possibly prevented. We are just in the beginning of this effort, but it is promising.

We are working with *Time* on the correction of two points in the article. First, the incidence of schizophrenia is about 12 per 100,000, making it a relatively rare occurrence, even though it seems more common because so few people recover after a first episode. Also, the finding of high rates of onset of psychosis was reported not by us, but by our colleagues in the North American Prodrome Longitudinal Study. They found that 34% of those meeting SIPS criteria had an onset within 30 months. Up to 80% of those having various mixtures of risk factors had onset in that period. The field is still working to improve the accuracy of prediction using a variety of clinical, psychological and biological measures.

Finally, while my initial interest in families was in part stimulated by the work on communication deviance and criticism, our current intervention is based on the remarkable strengths and abilities that families can bring to treatment, rehabilitation and possibly even prevention. Family members buffer the stresses that can have a negative impact on a vulnerable young person. Most importantly, family members are often the first to notice that something is not quite right and can make an early referral, making possible preventive treatment. We see the family of our patients as one of their strongest and most important assets.

Sincerely,

William R. McFarlane, M.D.

Early Detection and Intervention for the
Prevention of Psychosis Program
295 Park Avenue, Portland, ME 04102


Maine Medical Center
Department of Psychiatry